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ties which he visits. Among the most valuable records are those which accumulate in the hands of the county directors appointed by the Minnesota Public Safety Commission; at the suggestion of the historical society the commission sent a circular letter to each of these men directing them to preserve all records and correspondence, and ultimately to turn them over to the society. For a large part of his material the future historian of the rôle played by the state and its component parts in the war will have to rely upon files of newspapers. The Minnesota Historical Society has for many years been receiving and preserving the current issues of hundreds of newspapers and periodicals published in the state. At the time of the declaration of war the list included over half the entire number with at least one from each county. Many other papers have now been added, including especially those which reflect or mold the opinions of special groups or interests. In addition to the accumulation of this material, members of the staff of the society have been examining the files and making an index of all the valuable material illustrative of Minnesota's participation in the war.

Some of the subjects touched upon in this note will probably be dealt with more fully in future issues of the *BULLETIN*, particularly the ways and means of collecting and preserving material. Enough has been said, however, to make it clear that the worker in the field of history who desires to do so can find ample opportunity for service in war time along the line of his profession or avocation.

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### THE PRESERVATION OF NEWSPAPERS

In popular estimation the newspaper is cheap, yet few things appeal more intimately to humanity. It instructs the inquiring, delights the gossip lover, gauges public sentiment for the politician, vents man's vanity, and punishes the evil-doer. No

one can afford to be without it. Nor does its usefulness end with the day or week of publication as is frequently supposed. The despised "back number" has a value that increases as the years pass. Not alone does the historian find in its pages mines of priceless information, but public officials, attorneys, students, business men—in fact all classes—consult it for facts of supreme importance for their peculiar needs. It is quite a matter of course, then, that those organizations which have made it their task to collect and preserve historical material should include in such material files of newspapers.

The Minnesota Historical Society has from the time of its establishment endeavored to make its collection of Minnesota papers as complete as possible. The collection contains at the present time upwards of twelve thousand bound volumes, including the only existing earliest files of St. Paul and St. Anthony papers, the first published in Minnesota. On August 1, 1917, the library was receiving regularly 407 Minnesota papers, comprising 27 dailies, 371 weeklies, 8 semi-weeklies, and 1 triweekly. That the society has been able to build up this splendid collection has been largely due to the coöperation, through the donation of their journals, of the publishers of the state, who recognize the manifest advantage to themselves of so doing. It is with the hope that the benefits enjoyed by each may be more completely realized that some of the details connected with the work of caring for these papers are herewith presented.

Some of the editor-publishers may not be aware that the papers they send in to the society are preserved and bound. This, in truth, is done with unremitting care and orderliness. When a sheet is printed unevenly, as often happens, it is so folded that no important local news, legal advertising, or proceedings of local governing boards may be sacrificed to the binder's trimmer. When a paper is received badly torn, or with an essential part gone, or is defective through careless press work or other causes, it is not bound with the other numbers unless a requisition on the publisher for a perfect copy

is disregarded. Even small rents, especially on margins, are mended. Half-sheets and tiny supplements are pasted in, to prevent their being lost or misplaced. Traveled visitors, including members of the American Library Association, have been good enough to say that the Minnesota collection is kept in the best shape of any in the country.

The work of binding is often hampered, however, by reason of missing numbers; it is important that the files be complete, for sad experience born of unheeded warnings has proved that the copy that is lacking is sometimes the most sorely needed of all. To secure these numbers anywhere from one to a dozen requests, by postal card or letter or by both, are sent out to the publishers in each case. While many responses are made to the first request, in some instances no reply is received either in the shape of the desired copies or in explanation of their non-appearance. A note from the publisher designating the copies that he is unable to supply is helpful. It frequently happens that missing numbers which it has seemed impossible to acquire come straggling in after long delays; their insertion in the bound volumes results in a badly misshapen book. Some newspaper owners apparently ignore our reiterated appeals on principle. In one or two instances whole months are lacking, and the case is so hopeless that missing copies are no longer asked for and the files are all but worthless. In 1915 sixty publishers were remiss, with 116 issues; and in 1916 seventy-one publishers, with a total of 286 missing copies, failed to reply. Happily no grounds for complaint exist as to the dailies. So promptly and courteously have the needs of the society been responded to that every file for years past is complete.

Through their coöperation in this public service the newspaper publishers are performing a service advantageous to themselves. Many of them hold their own files for years before binding, and some do not attempt to bind at all. The papers are often pitched into haphazard storage where they gather dirt and furnish food for mice. When a publisher must

have a back number, he is likely to find it only after overhauling the entire confused heap. Frequently the copy sought can not be found; perhaps it is not there at all; a whole month's file may be gone. It often happens, when a suit involving a contested or unsettled estate is pending and the evidence of a published legal notice is imperative, that a publisher is called upon by an order of the court to produce a copy of his paper issued five, ten, or twenty years ago, and finds himself unable to comply with the demand. A more serious danger which threatens the files of the country publisher is the destruction of his printing shop by fire. In such circumstances what a comfort for him to know that well-bound files of his paper from the first number are deposited safely and guarded vigilantly in the library of the historical society at the state capital. A few years ago a suit involving heavy property interests was being tried at Crookston; in the course of the trial it became necessary to adjourn court in order that an attorney might go to St. Paul to see a legal advertisement which appeared in a certain paper, the only copy of which in existence was preserved in the historical library, the home office with its files having been destroyed by fire. In preparing their semicentennial anniversary number of May 25, 1917, the publishers of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, thrice visited by fire, would have been at sea but for the society's newspaper division. From it they obtained not only the loan of the first copy, which they reproduced in facsimile, but valuable missing links in the history of the paper, which might possibly have been secured from other sources, but only at the expense of weeks and perhaps months of quasi-detective work.

It would be advantageous both to reader and newspaper custodian were the number of pages and sections contained stated on the first page of every issue. This is, of course, unnecessary where the sheet is invariably of the same size and all in one section. Suppose a publisher puts out two sections regularly for years. Then the paper comes with but one section, sometimes labeled "section 1." The custodian

sends for section 2 and is informed that there was none. The second part may reappear the following week or it may be suspended for a longer time and then resumed. A little care for details of this character on the part of publishers lessens appreciably the troubles of the newspaper librarian.

Working with the society for the public good, the editors of the state have it in their power to enhance the mutually beneficial relations that have existed so long and in the main so pleasantly between themselves and the society. They can dissipate much of the ignorance, apathy, and misunderstanding regarding the society which arise from unacquaintance with its work. That these are so prevalent throughout the state is not to be wondered at when right in St. Paul there are thousands of people who are unaware that the historical society has such a thing as a newspaper collection, and who think that it still burrows in the Old Capitol, vacated twelve years ago! Let editors and publishers consider at all times the growing importance of the society as a vital force in the educational system of the state. Let them think of their children and of their readers' children, whose education is to be perfected at the state university, with which institution the society is closely affiliated.

The Minnesota Historical Society lives and works for to-morrow. Its nature and purposes appeal to all intelligent men save those unable to emerge from the narrow channels of self-interest; those whom nothing but financial gain or sensuous pleasures can attract. Under territory and state, in the interest of this society and therefore of posterity, Minnesotans most eminent in statesmanship and in official, professional, and business life have given liberally of their time, strength, and means, with no reward whatsoever aside from that indescribable satisfaction which is his who has rendered unselfish public service of value.

It has been said sneeringly that this organization is founded merely upon sentiment. Granted. But they who speak contemptuously of sentiment are the unthinking. Patriotism

itself is "nothing but sentiment." And the mainspring of the patient, persevering, oft baffled efforts of the creators, officers, and members of the Minnesota Historical Society from 1849 to 1917 has been of the same spirit that is about to bring victory to our arms on battlefields beyond the sea. In things having to do with the very bedrock of life, the real essentials which shall endure until time is not, sentiment counts for incalculably more than the dollar.

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